



## Delta pilot uses water sports to help rehabilitate veterans returning from war

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### THE DELTA DIFFERENCE



**By Louis Goggans, Corporate Communications**

In June of 2012, Stefan Leroy's life changed forever.

While serving in Afghanistan, his platoon was clearing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) when two of them suddenly exploded. Stefan rushed to aid those injured by the blast.

While carrying an injured soldier to a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) helicopter, he was struck by a third explosion and instantly lost both of his legs. He spent the following two years learning to walk again in prosthetics.

Stefan is one of more than 3,000 veterans who have been positively impacted by Wake for Warriors, a water sports nonprofit founded by Delta pilot David Deep in 2012 to both help rehabilitate injured veterans and establish a sense of camaraderie.



*Stefan Leroy*

From wakesurfing and wakeboarding to paddleboarding, kayaking, mountain biking and fishing, there are a plethora of sports veterans get a chance to enjoy as a form of therapy. While the activities are a crucial part of the healing process, there's one thing that matters more: the connections that the veterans make with each other.

"I think the most important thing for anyone that has experienced traumatic events in their lives is to stay connected with people that have an understanding of what they've been through," said David, First Officer – A-320 and a veteran of the U.S. Marines. "It's awesome to see these veterans cheering on and encouraging each other even though they just met. These bonds have helped create a network of veterans that are willing to support each other when times get difficult "

Other which times get amount.



During his nearly three-decade tenure in the Marines, David was responsible for flying AH-1 attack helicopters for over 250 combat missions, escorting the medevac flights from the battlefield to field hospitals. It was during this time that a desire to create Wake for Warriors was formed.

"Witnessing the sacrifice of these individuals first hand motivated me to get involved in their healing process," said David. "I was an avid wakeboarder when I was on active duty and enjoyed spending time on the water with friends and family. After my two deployments to Afghanistan, I realized that being on the water had a restorative effect on me, and I wanted to share that with fellow veterans."

Wake for Warriors reportedly hosts 20 events a year across the nation. In 2021 alone, Wake for Warriors has held 29 events in 16 states with approximately 300 veteran participants.

"Our four day camps across the country provide a few relaxing days on the water focusing

"Our four-day camps across the country provide a few relaxing days on the water focusing on wakeboarding and wakesurfing," David said. "More importantly, being together with other veterans creates an opportunity to build relationships that last beyond the event."



*David Deep celebrating the 101st birthday of Tuskegee Airman Oscar Gadson.*

## **APPRECIATING OUR VETERANS**

We have a continued commitment to those who put their lives on the line for this country and will always support them. That's why we partner with a wide variety of organizations, like Fisher House Foundation, the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation, USO, Luke's Wings and others to consistently contribute to veterans and their families.

We also have our Veterans Business Resource Group that serves as a resource to connect both active military and veterans with professional development and networking opportunities.

All Delta people who are veterans or on active duty but haven't updated their status with Delta should visit Deltanet > My Tools > Self Service > My Career > Talent Profile to do so at their convenience. It's entirely optional, but it's a good way to keep track of how many veterans and service members are at Delta.

Visit the Wake for Warriors website for more information about David's amazing work.

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and enjoyed spending time on the water with friends and family. After my two deployments to Afghanistan, I realized that being on the water had a restorative effect on me, and I wanted to share that with fellow veterans."

# THE DELTA DIFFERENCE



- DAVID DEEP, Flight Ops

## 11 COMMENTS

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**Vagher, Kim A** New

11/16/21 09:24

I love this! What an awesome and selfless act of kindness that you're sharing do with these well deserving heroes!!! God bless you and ALL our veterans!!

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Spangler, Jeffrey K** New

11/16/21 08:51

Outstanding! God bless you, David!

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Abbott, Cory** New

11/16/21 04:53

HERO !!!!!

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Awow, Daud M** New

11/16/21 03:44

beautiful act of kindness love it

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Reynolds, Carol**

11/15/21 07:33

I am so proud of David Deep to volunteer his time to make a difference in Veterans lives! I don't know you David, but what a fabulous man you must be. If there is ever a need for volunteers to help with these events, please let us know at Delta, I would be honored to volunteer.

↩ REPLY · 1 👍



**Dilbeck, Thomas R**

11/15/212021 04:25

Terrific! Good work Sir!

↩ REPLY · 2 👍



**Deep, Stephanie**

11/15/212021 03:58

So glad to see this article! Way to go Dave!!!

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Wigger, Leslie K**

11/15/212021 03:33

Love this so much - thanks for bringing the story to life, Louis!

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Naviaux, Jacques C**

11/15/212021 03:14

Way to go Bullet!

↩ REPLY · 0 👍



**Crane, Joseph H**

11/15/212021 02:24

Great job Bullet!! Get some.

↩ REPLY · 1 👍



**Dickerson, Bryan L**

11/15/212021 01:35

Very proud of David and the work he does to support those who sacrificed for all of us. Great pilot, great guy, GREAT Delta leader.

↩ REPLY · 2 👍